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BRIEFER ARTICLES

A SIMPLE REVOLVING TABLE FOR STANDARDIZING POROUS CUP ATMOMETERS

(WITH ONE FIGURE)

In connection with field work carried on during the past season the writer has had occasion to standardize nearly 70 porous cup atmometers of the type described by LIVINGSTON.[1] The necessity of exposing the various cups in a series to uniform atmospheric conditions during the standardizing process is readily comprehended, but the difficulty in securing such conditions can be fully appreciated only by those who have tried it. LIVINGSTON has recently described a rotating table for standardizing these instruments,[2] and so far as fulfilling the requirements is concerned this can scarcely be improved upon. The only objection to it is the amount of time and expense involved in its construction, an objection which may have considerable weight if what is needed is a makeshift contrivance for temporary or perhaps occasional use rather than a durable piece of permanent equipment. The writer has devised for his purpose a very simple type of revolving table which can be constructed from readily obtainable materials with very little labor and expense and which has proven very serviceable.

This apparatus is shown in the accompanying photograph (fig. 1). It consists, in brief, of the front wheel of a bicycle suspended horizontally within a wooden framework; on the upper side of the wheel is laid a piece of thick cardboard, or pulpboard, to support the bottles; from the lower side of the wheel wooden vanes are hung perpendicularly; the wheel is then caused to rotate by means of an air current from an electric fan. For constructing the framework three-quarter inch pine board is sufficiently heavy, and rigidity is insured by the use of braces at the angles; the dimensions are largely a matter of convenience and will naturally depend somewhat on the diameter of the wheel used, height of atmometers, size of vanes, etc.; the framework shown in the figure measures 36×30×24 inches (inside height, inside width, and depth, respectively). For supporting the wheel two upright pieces are used; one of these projects vertically upward from near the center of the base of the framework (see fig. 1) to a level somewhat less than halfway to the top; the other projects downward from the top of the framework, in line with the first, to a level somewhat less than halfway to the bottom; the distance between the two contiguous ends of these uprights should be slightly greater than the length of the wheel hub; both uprights should be firmly braced. The wheel is held in position between the two uprights by means of two iron "corner-braces" (which can be secured at any hardware store), in each of which one of the four screw holes has been bored large enough to fit the axle of the wheel. In adjusting the wheel to position a corner-brace is first screwed vertically to the upper end of the lower upright; the wheel is set in this and then firmly fixed in place by means of the second corner-brace which is screwed to the lower end of the upper upright; any slight divergence of the wheel from the horizontal plane can be corrected later by tilting the entire framework. For vanes 8 pieces of light wood about 8×10 inches are used; these are attached to the spokes by means of screw-hooks, being hung at a slight angle to the radii of the wheel; they are tied to the rim at their upper edges and are further held in position by means of wooden strips tacked to their lower edges. This table will accommodate 20 or more atmometers. As a precaution against the possibly disastrous

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[1] Carnegie Institution of Washington, Publication No. 50. 1906.

[2] Plant World **15**: 157–162. 1912.

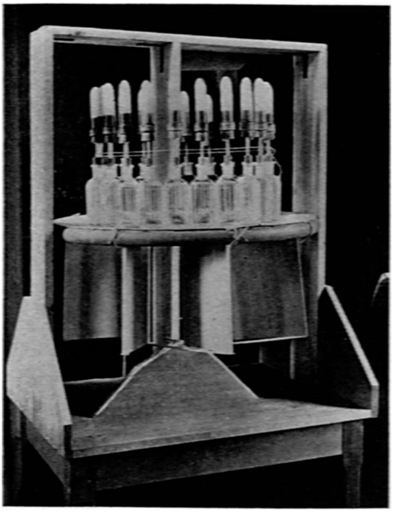

FIG. 1

effect of centrifugal force it is well to fasten a cord around the bottles after the manner shown in the figure. The velocity at which the table rotates can be controlled by regulating the position and angle of the fan with respect to the vanes. If the bearings of the wheel are properly adjusted and the table with its load carefully balanced, a speed of less than four revolutions per minute can be maintained. The direct air current from the fan should not strike the cups.

Such a revolving table as the one here described was run in the writer's laboratory almost continuously for nearly three weeks at a speed ranging from 4 to 20 revolutions per minute and gave no trouble whatever. In order to determine the accuracy of the data obtained, a test series of 20 cups was operated under various conditions for more than a week, readings being taken daily. It was found that with the table revolving at a rate of 8 revolutions or less per minute the coefficients derived from the readings of consecutive days varied very little; for several days none of the cups showed a variation amounting to as much as one per cent, while the difference in evaporation between two standard cups amounted to less than 0.2 per cent. With increased speed, however, the coefficients are apt to fluctuate, due to various causes.—G. E. NICHOLS, *Yale University.*

POISONING BY GINKGO

Several botanists after dissecting the fruits of *Ginkgo* have developed what appeared to be ivy poisoning. As the juice of the *Ginkgo* produced an immediate irritation of the skin, it was suspected that the rash which developed the following day was due to this. Later tests proved this to be the case. The poison is in the outer fleshy layer. It does not affect all people, since the gardeners at Smith College and at Mount Holyoke College have never been poisoned by handling the *Ginkgo* fruits, but a gardener in Elyria, Ohio, who cares for a fruiting tree in the yard of Mr. WILLIAM G. SHARP, writes that he is poisoned every fall by handling the fruits. The irritation produced is greater than that of poison ivy, and the infection spreads more persistently and is communicated from one person to another. Pustules rarely form, however, as in ivy poisoning, but there is a heavy red rash, attended by the formation of welts in severe cases.—ANNA M. STARR, *Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Mass.*